

Message Text

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USDEL MBFR VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 15313

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PARM, NATO, UR

SUBJECT: KOSTKO ON MBFR

REF: A. MOSCOW 13814; B. A-43, JANUARY 31, 1975

1. SUMMARY. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF OCT 21, YURI KOSTKO, AN OFFICIAL OF THE INSTITUTE OF WORLD ECONOMY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (MEMO) SPECIALIZING ON QUESTIONS OF EUROPEAN SECURITY, MADE TWO MAIN POINTS ON MBFR: (1) RUMORED NATO OFFER TO REDUCE NUCLEAR WARHEADS WILL BE A WELCOMEE STEP IN SENSE IT WOULD BE OF SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE; BUT (2) REDUCTION OF NUCLEAR WARHEADS ALONE WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO CAUSE WARSAW PACT TO CHANGE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH IT NOW BASES ITS NEGOTIATING POSITION IN MBFR. KOSTKO SAID THAT ONLY THREE ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO MBFR EXIST: EQUAL PERCENTAGE CUTS; A "MIXED PACKAGE" APPROACH; AND "POLITICAL REDUCTIONS" MADE WITHOUT REGARD TO TECHNICAL DETAILS. HE SAID HE SAW NO REASON FOR THE EAST TO CHANGE FROM ITS ADHERENCE TO THE FIRST APPROACH, FOR THE SECOND APPROACH IS TOO COMPLEX TO AGREE ON. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT A "POLITICAL APPROACH" (BY WHICH WE UNDERSTOOD HIM TO BE SPEAKING LARGELY OF

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TOKEN CUTS) WOULD HAVE ITS ATTRACTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. KOSTKO, WHOSE RESPONSIBILITIES AT PRESENT REVOLVE TO A LARGE DEGREE AROUND MBFR, INDICATED INTEREST IN FREQUENT MENTION IN THE WESTERN PRESS OF POSSIBLE NEW NATO INITIATIVE TO REDUCE NUCLEAR WARHEAD STOCKS IN NATO STATES. DISCUSSING POSSIBLE RAMIFICATIONS OF SUCH A PROPOSAL, HE SAID THAT THE SOVIET UNION IN HIS OPINION WOULD WELCOME INITIATIVE AS POLITICALLY IMPORTANT MOVE WHICH WOULD INDICATE CONTINUED WESTERN INTEREST IN COMING TO AN AGREEMENT. HE SAID AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD NOT OVERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE IN PRINCIPLE OF SUCH A PROPOSAL, BECAUSE IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT THE U.S. HAS LONG BEEN PLANNING TO REDUCE ITS NUCLEAR WARHEAD STOCKPILES IN EUROPE. NATO SHOULD THEREFORE NOT EXPECT THE EAST TO REPLY TO THE PROPOSAL BY UNDERTAKING TO CHANGE THE PRINCIPLES WHICH FORM THE BASIS FOR THEIR PROPOSALS IN THE TALKS.

3. KOSTKO, IN AN EXPOSITION, INDICATED THAT THERE ARE REALLY ONLY THREE ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO REACHING A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT.

(1) EQUAL-PERCENTAGE REDUCTIONS AT THE UNIT (PODRAZDELENIYE) LEVEL OF WHOLE ORGANIZATIONAL ENTITIES HAVING SIMILAR FUNCTIONS AND SIMILAR EQUIPMENT;
(2) REDUCTIONS BY UNITS OF DIFFERING FUNCTIONS AND WITH DIFFERING EQUIPMENT, ON THE BASIS OF AN AGREED FORMULATION WHICH ESTABLISHES EQUIVALENCY;
(3) AND "POLITICAL" REDUCTIONS WHICH ESSENTIALLY DISREGARD ORDERS OF BATTLE AND EQUIPMENT.

4. DISCUSSING HIS ALTERNATIVES, HE SAID THAT THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES WERE USING THE FIRST APPROACH, AND EMPHASIZED THAT HE COULD THINK OF NOTHING WHICH WOULD CAUSE THEM TO CHANGE THEIR CHOICE. HE CLAIMED THAT THE SECOND APPROACH HAD BEEN EXAMINED, BUT THAT IT SIMPLY IS TOO DIFFICULT TO ARRIVE AT EQUATIONS WHICH WOULD DO AN ACCEPTABLE JOB OF ESTABLISHING EQUIVALENCY BETWEEN UNITS WITH DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS. HE POINTED TO THE LONG HISTORY OF SUCH PROPOSALS, CONTENDING THAT THEY HAD BEEN PART AND PARCEL OF EVERY DISCUSSION OF EUROPEAN SECURITY SINCE THE MID-1950'S.
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5. KOSTKO ADMITTED THAT THE THIRD APPROACH HAD ITS ATTRIBUTES. HE SAID THAT SYMBOLIC REDUCTIONS "OF THE SORT BRANDT SPOKE OF" HAD MUCH TO RECOMMEND THEM. HE SAID THAT THE SCENARIO WHICH MIGHT HAVE THE BEST CHANCE OF BEING ACCEPTED BY BOTH SIDES WOULD BE ONE WHICH AT LEAST BEGAN WITH SMALL CUTS OF EQUAL NUMBERS OF TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT, WITH DISCUSSIONS OF FURTHER CUTS TO BE RECONVENED "AFTER THE

ATMOSPHERE HAD BEEN IMPROVED BY THE SMYBOLIC CUTS." HE SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT ANY REDUCTION BY THE WEST OF NUCLEAR TACTICAL WARHEADS FIT INTO THIS CATEGORY OF "SYMBOLISM". AT VARIOUS TIMES THROUGH THE DISCUSSION, HE ADMITTED TO SOVIET POLITICAL INTEREST IN COMING TO AN AGREEMENT IN VIENNA, AND IMPLIED THAT TOKENISM MIGHT BE THE WAY OUT.

6. COMMENT. KOSTKO IS NOT OF COURSE A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN ON MBFR, AND TENDS TO HOLD TOUGHER VIEWS ON THE TOPICS HE DEALS WITH THAN SOME OTHER KNOWLEDGEABLE SOVIETS. AT THE SAME TIME, HE WORKS ON MBFR, IS THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR WITH THE ISSUES, AND ALMOST CERTAINLY REFLECTS OFFICIAL SOVIET THINKING EVEN IF HE IS NOT PRESENTING OFFICIAL SOVIET POSITIONS. WE ARE STRUCK BY TWO POINTS IN HIS REMARKS. FIRST, IN DISCOUNTING A WESTERN NUCLEAR OFFER IN ADVANCE, HE REFERS ONLY TO WARHEADS. SINCE HE MUST BE AWARE FROM PRESS REPORTS THAT OTHER SYSTEMS ARE UNDER DISCUSSION, THE IMPLICATION--TO THE EXTENT HE CONSIDERS AN OFFER INCLUDING OTHER SYSTEMS LIKELY--IS THAT HE WOULD FIND SUCH AN OFFER LESS "SYMBOLIC", AND THEREFORE EITHER HARDER TO DISMISS OR HARDER TO NEGOTIATE, OR BOTH. SECOND, THE MOST STRIKING FEATURE OF KOSTKO'S REMARKS IS THE GROWING SOVIET ATTRACTION TO A TOKENIST SOLUTION THEY SEEM TO IMPLY'

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